

CHAPTER XV

THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

RAGUSA now enters into the vortex of the Napoleonic wars, in which she, like her great rival Venice and many another still more powerful State, was to disappear. The story of her end is but an incident in that wonderful drama, but it affords some curious side-lights on the history of Europe at that period, and exhibits for the last time the peculiar character of the Ragusan Government and people.

In 1797 the French armies occupied Venice, put an end to the Republic, and annexed its possessions, while a French fleet seized the Ionian Islands. In the meanwhile Austrian troops were advancing into Dalmatia, which, as part of Venetian territory, in theory belonged to France, and ships of war of all nations began to appear in the Adriatic. The aristocratic Government of Venice was for a time succeeded by a democratic one modelled on French lines, and the new *régime* was to have been applied to Dalmatia as well. But by the preliminaries of Leoben that province and Istria were given over to Austria. The Dalmatians did not want a democratic constitution, and for some time Austrian agents had been preparing them for an Austrian occupation. They succeeded in inducing the people to acclaim the Emperor Francis II. as their King, and in July 1797 General